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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper was to explore elements of socialization in metropolitan and nonmetropolitan lower-class black populations which might impede motivational development in the lower-class black child. One objective was to describe the nature of the following factors which may affect goal striving of the lower-class black youth: mothers' educational aspirations, educational expectations, and occupational expectations for their children; mothers' attitudes about educational and occupational achievement; mothers' attitudes about child-rearing; and cohesiveness of the black family units. Another objective was to determine the extent to which variation in these elements of socialization within the black lower-class populations could be explained by indicators of the families' relative articulations with American society's opportunity structures. The data utilized were collected in the summers of 1970 and 1971 from black wives residing in nonmetropolitan East Texas and metropolitan Houston, respectively. All respondents were interviewed by black female adults who had been trained by the researchers in interviewing procedure. The nonmetropolitan sample was drawn from a town of about 5,000 population. The metropolitan sample was comprised of residents of an economically disadvantaged, almost all-black ghetto. (Author/JM)

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Elements of Socialization Impeding or Facilitating Goal-Striving in the Lower-Class Black Family*

by

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Introduction

Robert Staples (1971) has stated that one of the roles of socialization in the black family is "to inculcate the appropriate motivational elements in the black child for goal striving." Evidence that lower-class black mothers generally express high occupational and educational aspirations for their children (Dietrich, 1973; Lewis, 1955; Broom and Glenn, 1965; Bernard, 1966), lends credibility to the thesis that it is not this goal of socialization but the ability to implement the goal that distinguishes socialization in the black lower-class. That lower-class black mothers are often successful in inculcating these goals in their children, however, is evidenced by the similarly high aspirations generally expressed by lower-class black youth (Thomas, 1970; Kuvlesky and Lever, 1967; Kuvlesky and Jacob, 1970). Nevertheless, aspirations are only one of the elements of motivation requisite for achievement. The objectives of this paper are: (1) to explore aspirations in context with other elements of socialization in the black lower-class which might impede motivational development in the black child; (2) to determine the extent to which variation in these elements of socialization within the black lower-class itself is explained by families' relative articulations with the opportunity structure. The elements of socialization to be explored are: mothers' expectations compared with aspirations; goal inconsistency; mothers' attitudes about educational and occupational achievement; mothers' attitudes about child-rearing; and cohesiveness in the black family-units.

Aspirations versus Expectations. Expectations are distinguished from aspirations in that they are the more realistic element of success goals. They are more likely to reflect perception of environmental barriers that will be encountered in goal pursuit and are more likely to represent the object toward which goal-oriented behavior, or goal-striving, will be directed. If the black lower-class mother who expresses high aspirations for her child realistically assesses her child's opportunities for achievement, her expectations will often be deflated downward. Advertently or inadvertently, these lower expectations are likely to be communicated to the child and, therefore, to be the more salient influence than the mothers aspirations on the child's achievement oriented behavior.

Goal Incompatibility. Robert Merton (1957) emphasized over a decade ago the importance of an integrated "frame of aspirational reference." By this, he meant that an individual aspires simultaneously to more than one type of status attainment. Two types of status attainment which are integrally related for success in American society are education and occupation. To the extent to which these goals are inconsistent (i.e., desired education is less than or more than that requisite for achievement of the occupational goal), achievement of one goal is likely to negate achievement of the other.

Mothers' Attitudes and Values Relating to Occupational and Educational Achievement. Other important motivational elements are attitudes and values. Attitudes and values are not synonymous with motivation; rather, they guide, or direct, motivated behavior. This involves determining the means by which and the commitment with which goals will be pursued.

the primacy of the pursuit of some goals over the pursuit of others, as well as the goals themselves and alternatives to goals that cannot be achieved.

The following attitudes and values are postulated to contribute to lack of achievement in the lower classes: (1) emphasis upon immediate gratification instead of planning and deferred gratification (Brown, 1956; Rabinowitz, 1970); (2) attitudes of fatalism instead of belief in the ability of individuals to manipulate their environment to their advantage (Rivers, 1956); (3) feelings of alienation from society's economic opportunity structures (Lewis, 1966); (4) validity of education and occupation as means to ends (instrumental goals) instead of as ends in themselves (intrinsic goals) (Rosenfeld, 1969).

Child-rearing. Two techniques of child-rearing that are postulated to inhibit children's achievement (Walters and Stinnett, 1971) are: punitive attempts at child control and the lack of granting of child autonomy. These techniques are said to characterize the black lower-class, because they have been observed to be more prevalent among lower-class blacks than among the middle-class (Kamii and Radin, 1967; Rosenthal, 1971). Such techniques involve emphasis upon physical punishment and appeals to status and authority rather than reasons or guilt (Kamii and Radin, 1967). Their postulated results are to lessen development of inner controls in the child (Kamii and Radin, 1967) and to discourage the child to think for himself. In regard to the latter and its implications for goal setting, the child does not develop the ability to rationally weigh his goals and alternative means of attaining these goals, nor does he learn to distinguish between harmful and helpful influences on these goals (Rosenthal, 1971).

collection of [illegible], but let us for [illegible] first set [illegible] to show the [illegible] point for separating the [illegible]. That is, it can be argued that both of the variables within the [illegible] [illegible] can still be declared to [illegible] [illegible] with [illegible]'s [illegible] [illegible]. The [illegible] of this argument is that the greater a [illegible]'s [illegible] with the [illegible], the more [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] for [illegible].

[illegible]

The data utilized were [illegible] to the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. The [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

of the households are purchased and subsequently consumed. The only study available is that of Kumar, Mathias and Pfaffenberger (1979) [illegible] households. Two of these households in Kumbakonpettai and Periyakulam have been excluded from this study, because they were not the actual workers on questions of one of the children working in the house. All households were interviewed to elicit basic socio-economic data and their consumption patterns. Some of the households selected in the study area, who were then personally [illegible] with the respondents.

Consumption of Commodities: According to various estimates, almost all of the households presented to be of low socio-economic [illegible]. The large majority of backward and scheduled [illegible] are illiterate and are employed in agricultural or agricultural jobs. According to a poverty index in which income is evaluated in relation to family size, age of family members, and a constant price index for the study period, households in some of the villages, Coimbatore [illegible] and Tirupur is in disadvantaged in of weighted poverty status. This index, however, is inappropriate for the discussion of undernourishing presented and poorer [illegible] that weighted level were still generally low, suggesting that of the families could be considered disadvantaged.

Assessment

Assessment mechanisms and Opportunities for Children: The first [illegible] were asked the following question to estimate to this children [illegible] years of: "Are you working hard? Are your parents sick? Are [illegible] going to work?" Responses elicited were:

Table 1. Lower-Class Black Mothers' Educational Aspirations for Their Children.

Highest Level of Schooling Desired	Metropolitan		Nonmetropolitan	
	for Sons	for Daughters	for Sons	for Daughters
	- - -

Table 3. Lower-Class Black Mothers' Occupational Aspirations for Their Children

Modified Hollingshead Occupational Scale	Metropolitan for Sons	Metropolitan for Daughters	Nonmetropolitan for Sons	Nonmetropolitan for Daughters
	%			
I.				
Major Professional	47.8	5.8	45.3	5.2
Higher Executives	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
Prestigious Glamour	4.8	3.6	4.7	3.3
II.				
Lesser Professionals	20.5	32.9	30.0	38.3
Business Managers of Large Concerns	0.5	0.4	0.0	0.6
III.				
Administrative Personnel	1.0	2.7	0.7	0.6
Semi-Professional	1.5	36.0	0.0	34.4
IV.				
Clerical & Sales Workers	1.5	13.3	2.0	11.7
Technicians	2.9	1.8	0.0	0.0
V.				
Skilled Manual Employees	10.2	3.1	12.7	3.9
VI.				
Machine Operators & Semi-skilled Employees	4.4	0.0	1.3	0.0
VII.				
Unskilled Employees	1.5	0.4	1.3	2.0
Proprietors	1.9	0.0	2.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	205	225	150	154
No Answer	33	18	20	14

Compared to educational aspirations, the latter occupational aspirations were low. That is, the education desired exceeded the educational prerequisite for these occupations. Such goal inconsistency was also evident in regard to aspirations for sons, but not to the extent that it was in regard to aspirations for daughters. Goal inconsistency was also more eivdent among the nonmetropolitan than metropolitan mothers.

Attitudes and Values About Educational and Occupational Achievement. The overwhelming majority of the nonmetropolitan and metropolitan mothers agreed with the items which were judged likely to facilitate the educational achievement of their children (Table 4). Agreement was strongest in regard to those items which dealt with the importance of education for children, even if the pursuit of such education entailed substantial sacrifice. Agreement was less with items 3 and 4, which dealt with a general adult referent, although the majority of mothers still responded positively to these items.

Item 5 was designed to tap feelings of alienation or integration with the school or other socializing agencies outside of the family. The positive responses to this item suggest moderate to strong integration in this respect.

The items enumerated in Table 5 are those judged likely to hinder educational or occupational achievement of children. Only one of these items was generally answered positively by a majority of the black mothers: "Few people really look forward to their work." Among the metropolitan respondents, disagreement was less with those items dealing with occupation than with those dealing with education. In regard to education, dropping out of high school was not condoned for financial reasons or lack

Table 4. Lower-Class Black Mothers' Attitudes Which Might Facilitate Educational Achievement of Their Children

Attitude		Definately Agree	Tend to Agree	Not Sure	Tend to Disagree	Definitely Disagree	TOTAL
		%					
1. Even though it may cause our children to move away to a distant city to get a good job, they need to get a good education.	Metro	74.3	18.8	0.7	5.1	1.0	100.0
	Nonmetro	80.4	12.6	0.0	4.0	3.0	100.0
2. It is important for children to get an education no matter what it costs.	Metro	61.9	28.9	0.0	7.2	2.1	100.0
	Nonmetro	77.9	14.6	0.5	5.0	2.0	100.0
3. The man with an education is more respected than an uneducated man.	Metro	47.6	17.8	2.4	18.5	13.7	100.0
	Nonmetro	66.8	19.1	3.5	6.0	4.5	100.0
4. People are better accepted by others if they have an education or job-training.	Metro	32.9	40.5	1.0	14.5	11.1	100.0
	Nonmetro	63.3	24.1	1.5	8.0	3.0	100.0
5. Families can get help with their children's problems from school and other places.	Metro	55.7	33.2	0.3	7.6	3.1	100.0
	Nonmetro	51.8	32.7	3.5	10.6	1.5	100.0

Table 5. Lower-Class Black Mothers' Attitudes Which Might Hinder Educational or Occupational Achievement of Their Children

Attitude		Definitely Agree	Tend to Agree	Not Sure	Tend to Disagree	Definitely Disagree	TOTAL
Education							
1. If the family needs more money it is all right for a child to quit school and help out for a while.	Metro	4.8	14.2	1.4	24.9	34.7	100.0%
	Nonmetro	12.1	17.6	1.0	11.6	57.8	100.0%
2. It is all right to drop out of high school if more money is needed to buy clothing for the family.	Metro	5.8	10.3	0.7	30.8	52.4	100.0%
	Nonmetro	14.6	14.6	1.0	14.1	55.8	100.0%
3. It is all right to drop out of high school if the student isn't interested.	Metro	11.3	20.2	1.4	26.7	40.4	100.0%
	Nonmetro	21.2	22.3	2.0	17.2	37.4	100.0%
4. Parents & children don't get along as well when the children have more education than the parents.	Metro	8.2	13.6	2.7	35.1	42.8	100.0%
	Nonmetro	11.1	20.6	6.0	25.6	36.7	100.0%
5. When a child has problems there is no use getting in touch with the school because they aren't really interested.	Metro	9.6	14.8	0.7	29.6	45.4	100.0%
	Nonmetro	20.6	18.1	1.5	22.6	39.2	100.0%
6. Some people just cannot finish high school so why try.	Metro	10.1	17.2	1.7	32.4	38.3	100.0%
	Nonmetro	17.2	15.6	4.0	26.6	36.7	100.0%
Occupation							
1. It makes no difference which job you take because you are likely to get laid off anyway.	Metro	7.9	19.3	3.4	29.7	39.7	100.0%
	Nonmetro	16.7	17.2	1.0	27.3	37.9	100.0%
2. In getting a job, it is not what you know but who you know.	Metro	19.2	26.1	0.0	29.9	24.7	100.0%
	Nonmetro	18.6	23.8	3.0	21.1	33.3	100.0%
3. Few people really look forward to their work.	Metro	23.7	46.7	1.0	21.6	6.9	100.0%
	Nonmetro	15.9	35.4	3.5	37.7	7.6	100.0%

of interest by the majority of either the metropolitan or nonmetropolitan mothers. Mothers in both residence, however, were more likely to mention dropping out because of lack of interest than for financial reasons. Since the nonmetropolitan or metropolitan mothers were optimistic that a high school education was within reach of virtually all youth, they showed little fear if their children's education exceeded their own, and again they did not appear to feel alienated from the school.

A consistent pattern of residence differences was observed in the responses to the items tapping attitudes likely to hinder achievement. In reference to every one of these items, the nonmetropolitan mothers more frequently agreed than the metropolitan mothers.

Responses to the items tapping intrinsic versus instrumental orientations (Table 6) are patterned differently in reference to education and occupation. The majority of respondents showed an instrumental orientation toward education and an intrinsic orientation toward occupation. That is, education was valued as a means for occupational attainment whereas occupation, or job, was valued for itself and not merely as a means to monetary compensation.

Mothers' Attitudes About Child-Rearing. The lower-class black mothers evinced strong agreement with the statement, "Respect for parents is the most important thing kids should learn" (Table 7). This suggests an emphasis on authority and obedience that is likely to permeate the parent-child relationships. Congruent with this emphasis is the black mothers' perceptions of child control to be their primary role in the socialization process, as indicated by the positive response to item 2.

Table 4. Black Mothers' Attitudes on Instrumental Orientations Toward Education and Occupation.

Attitudes		Definitely Agree	Tend to Agree	Not Sure	Tend to Disagree	Definitely Disagree	Total
Intrinsic							
The main reason for getting an education is personal satisfaction.	Native	14.8	30.0	8.7	30.7	24.8	100.0
	Newcomer	18.1	17.4	2.8	32.7	30.6	100.0
It is important to do a job you can be proud of even if it is no more than the boss expects.	Native	52.9	35.7	3.4	6.2	1.7	100.0
	Newcomer	63.3	25.6	1.8	6.0	4.0	100.0
Instrumental							
The best education trains for a job.	Native	58.4	28.8	1.8	7.9	3.1	100.0
	Newcomer	65.6	24.3	3.0	7.6	1.5	100.0
A person should leave a job he likes for a job he does not like if it pays more money.	Native	19.5	17.3	1.4	30.8	36.9	100.0
	Newcomer	28.1	21.6	2.0	19.6	28.7	100.0
It is more important to choosing a job than what the job is.	Native	28.0	18.2	2.7	34.9	17.1	100.0
	Newcomer	28.1	24.6	5.5	18.1	23.6	100.0

Table 1. [illegible]

Attributes		Agree	Tend to Agree	Not Sure	Tend to Disagree	Definitely Disagree	Total
1. [illegible]	Males	66.7	9.2	9.8	5.7	3.3	100.0
	Females	61.3	5.0	9.4	5.0	9.3	100.0
2. [illegible]	Males	57.9	16.8	9.8	5.1	6.9	100.0
	Females	55.9	16.6	9.9	6.5	6.5	100.0
3. [illegible]	Males	46.8	16.9	5.8	16.9	7.3	100.0
	Females	45.7	16.2	5.9	16.2	7.3	100.0

The general agreement with that hierarchy and an anxiety as with the first two dimensions suggests positive interactions toward accomplishing this section.

The [illegible] concept agreement with these items to the non-acceptance that interaction within [illegible] suggests greater emphasis on control, authority, and punishments by a socialization practices of the preadolescent blacks.

Early Childhood. Slightly over half of both the preadolescent and adolescent lower-class black families speak high as the basic childhood tasks. The bulk of the remainder appeared at least extremely effective. Differences between the two sentences pairs were minimal (Table 5).

Causes of Variation in the Black Lower-Class. In addressing to most of the elements of socialization that were studied, the behaviors of the families' orientations with the appropriate structural explained almost none of the variance observed within the black lower-class (Table 6). The elements of socialization that were considered to be explained to behaviors of socioeconomic articulation with the parents' status projections for their children. In reference to the latter variables, the explanatory power of the behaviors of socio-economic articulation was greatest among the preadolescent from among the adolescent blacks. In general, mother's education explained most of the variation in these status projections; specifically, educational projections than the other indicators of articulation with opportunity structures.

[illegible]

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Besides the high educational aspirations, however, there were a number of other socializing influences seemingly propitious to goal-striving that were observed in the black families. Educational expectations of about half of the mothers were still quite high, and occupational aspirations for sons, at least, were generally high. Furthermore, occupational achievement tended to be valued for reasons other than just the money that it could provide. In fact, the attitudes about occupation and education which were expressed by the bulk of the black mothers appeared generally facilitative of achievement. In addition, the degree of family cohesiveness that was found suggests that this factor, at least, was conducive to the inculcation of these mothers' facilitative attitudes and values in their children.

The fact that these same general findings appeared in regard to both the nonmetropolitan and metropolitan populations lends credibility to our data. The findings point to the need to consider other socializing influences in conjunction with aspiration studies. In terms of status-attainment aspirations for their children, the goals of socialization of the lower-class black mothers appear to be like those of middle-class parents. Nevertheless, in terms of actual expectations (the more salient goal element), goal inconsistency, and the primacy granted the goal of control in child-rearing, the goals of socialization in many lower-class black families may differ critically from the middle-class and differ in such a manner as to inhibit goal achievement of their children. In other words, it may not be just the ability to implement socialization goals but, in the foregoing crucial respects, the goals themselves that differ by social class. Support of this thesis is also suggested by the finding that

mothers' status aspirations and expectations for their children were the elements of socialization most likely to vary by the families' relative articulations with the opportunity structures.

In regard to goal implementation, the findings of this study suggest that some of the factors previously thought to inhibit achievement in the black lower-class--attitudes and values about occupational and educational achievement and lack of family cohesiveness--are not such salient inhibiting forces after all. These findings point to the errors made in over-generalizing from traits found to be more prevalent in the black lower-class than in the middle-classes. Such traits may not even be characteristic of most of the black lower-class. In fact, indicators of the families' relative articulations with the opportunity structures explained almost none of the variation in these variables within the black lower-class itself. These two findings suggest that the substantive significance of socioeconomic differences that have been observed in these variables should be interpreted more cautiously. This same conclusion was recently reached by Erlanger (1974) in an assessment of the results of studies about socioeconomic differences in child punishment techniques.

A final implication of this study's findings relates to the observations of residence differences. Although the nonmetropolitan mothers evidenced higher educational aspirations than the metropolitan mothers, they also evidenced greater deflection from educational aspirations to educational expectations and greater goal inconsistency than the metropolitan mothers. In regard to all of the status projections, indicators of families' articulations with opportunity structures explained more variation among

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the nonmetropolitan than metropolitan mothers.

The nonmetropolitan mothers were also more likely than the metropolitan mothers to demonstrate attitudes which might hinder educational and occupational achievement. In addition, the nonmetropolitan mothers were more likely to emphasize control, authority, and punitiveness in their attitudes toward child-rearing. These findings suggest that there may be more socializing influences inhibiting motiviational development among nonmetropolitan than metropolitan lower-class blacks. This seems a fruitful topic for future research.

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